# Guidance for Residents' Steering Groups

**Co-produced by residents and H&F Council**

Make your voice count -
No decision about you, without you

h&f
hammersmith & fulham

**Important Information**

## Contents

# 1. Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to join the Residents' Steering Group (RSG) to work on a redevelopment proposal in your local area. Your involvement will be important in helping H&F Council to explore this proposal and decide whether or how to take it forward.

**This guidance has been co-produced by residents and Council officers. It outlines your group's role under the Defend Council Homes Policy (DCHP) and suggests ways of working together inclusively and effectively. It outlines some key principles and expectations but does not aim to give you a set of rules about how you will operate as it is important that you decide much of that for yourselves.**

You may be experienced in belonging to this kind of group or it may be your first time – either way, this guidance aims to help make this an enjoyable and rewarding group experience for everyone.

# 2. The Defend Council Homes Policy and Residents' Steering Groups

## i. Purpose of the Defend Council Homes Policy (DCHP)

The Policy aims to provide residents of council housing in Hammersmith & Fulham with extra protection if a redevelopment proposal on housing land would significantly affect their homes. It commits the Council to involving residents in the decision-making process so that they have a role in guiding the future of developments that may affect their homes.

The formation of a Residents' Steering Group is one way of putting this commitment into practice. The Policy says that an RSG is: "A group of local residents who agree to liaise and work with the Council on all aspects of a Redevelopment Proposal, Redevelopment Scheme and/or Redevelopment Programme, having regard to the best interests of all the residents affected and to the Council's compliance with Good Practice."

## ii. Membership of your Residents' Steering Group

The starting point is to form a core group of local residents, with membership open to council tenants, resident leaseholders and tenants of council leaseholders. Even if there is already a Tenants and Residents Association in place, it is usually better to create a new group with a focussed and distinct role.

Once your RSG gets going you may have good reasons to invite non-residents to join you, such as community figures from third sector organisations. If you do that it will be important to clarify roles: for instance, who has a purely advisory position and who will take part in decisions, if any need taking?

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# 3. Your roles and responsibilities as a Residents' Steering Group

## i. Core expectations

In broad terms your role is to liaise and work with the Council on all aspects of the redevelopment project - from design to construction - and to monitor the Council's adherence to Good Practice and compliance with the Defend Council Homes Policy.

Your 'hands-on' role will mean you contribute to some decisions directly, but you are not the 'voice' of all residents, speaking or making decisions on their behalf. Rather, your RSG will have a say in how the proposal should be taken forward, how decisions should be made, how residents will be kept informed and how they will have a voice.

It's important for members of the RSG to keep in mind that not everyone will agree with the development plans and consensus may not be possible. Debate on development proposals, with constructive positive and negative feedback, is an important part of the process and should be welcomed.
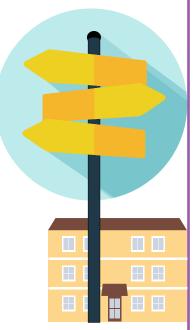
One of your first tasks will be to agree a Terms of Reference (ToR) that lays out clearly the objectives for your RSG, expectations of members and your working relationship with the Council and its partners. Creating a ToR is a good way to get everyone on the same page about what the group is for and what the rules should be.

## ii. Practical decisions you will need to make about your group

- How often and what time(s) of day will you meet?
- Will you have online or in-person meetings or a mix of the two?
- Who will be your Chair and what will that role include? Do you wish to assign any other roles?
- Do you want to chair your own meetings or ask another person to do that?
- How will you communicate within your group and with the Council, their partners and the wider body of residents?
- How will you make decisions?
- What confidentiality rules will you use?
- How self-sufficient do you want to be? Some groups may want to manage their own affairs and simply have the Council supply them with information and admin support, while others may want the Council to be hands-on with its support and guidance, without undermining the independence of the group.
- What training opportunities will you take up, either collectively or individually?

## iii. Activities that you may take part in as a Residents' Steering Group

This will vary considerably, depending on what point the Proposal, Scheme or Programme has reached. It will also depend on your group's circumstances and preferences, but one certainty is that you will have valuable local knowledge to contribute throughout the process.

**Examples of potential activities are:**

- In the early days, contributing to evaluation of different options for a development.
- Helping the Council to develop its resident communication and engagement plan.
- Promoting accessibility and inclusion.
- Taking part in selection of architects, communication and engagement consultants, technical advisers, resident liaison officers, independent advisers, construction contractors etc.
- Producing newsletters.
- Contributing to design decisions.
- Monitoring performance of contractors on site (e.g. construction contractors).
- Assisting with development and delivery of an implementation plan for a redevelopment programme. This may include a wide range of topics relating to residents, such as:
  - Temporary and permanent rehousing arrangements including home loss and disturbance payments (where appropriate).
  - Health and safety, site conditions and security.
  - On-site communications and complaints.
  - Community support, community facilities and community benefits for the future.
  - Programme monitoring, review and evaluation.
- Involving residents at appropriate stages. For instance, if aspects of a development will affect some residents more than others, it will make sense for them to have a strong voice in those decisions.

## iv. Being accountable

It is likely that residents will greatly appreciate the work you are doing on their behalf. They will also expect you to report back to them from time to time.

**How will you do this?**

- Will some or all of your meetings be public ones?
- Will you distribute minutes?
- Will you write newsletters or create a web page?
- How can residents tell you what they think about the redevelopment project or if they are unhappy with any of your work?

It may be helpful to ask residents what they would find most useful before you make these decisions.

Using a range of communication methods is likely to reach the most residents and this would usefully include contact through community groups that work with specific population groups.

Perhaps you could get Ward Councillors involved and they could spread the word when they meet with residents.

You might also include discussion of the development as part of community events such as fun days.

The Council will help you to assess how you are getting on, because however much an RSG is empowered to run its own activities, the Council has a duty to make sure that it fulfils its role.

# 4. How the Council will support you

The Council is committed to working in a co-productive way with residents. Your contribution is essential and very much appreciated.

The Council and its partners will support you in a variety of ways to carry out your role. This might be practical support or help with working together as effectively as possible. It includes:

## Information and communication

- Early help with getting your group started and agreeing your group's scope of activities, Terms of Reference etc.
- Clear information about the project as it progresses, including assistance with understanding plans, council processes, reports and presentations.
- Who's who: key contacts in the Council and their partners, explaining where everyone fits into the structure.
- Agreement about communication with you e.g. who will be your key contacts in the Council or their partners, how they will communicate and reasonable response times.
- Access to relevant policies and procedures.

## Training

- You will have access to both group and individual training. Essential training will include topics such as the DCH Policy and development and planning processes.
- Other options will depend on individual needs – it is all about helping each member to take part fully and happily in the group. You might participate in sessions on digital skills development; equalities, diversity and inclusion; co- production; procurement; meeting skills; teamwork and so on.

## Getting the most out of your meetings

- Administrative support such as minute-taking and distribution of meeting papers.
- Assistance with running meetings if needed e.g. if you would like someone to chair your group's meetings or larger community meetings.
- Follow-up on agreed actions, with timely updates.

## Help with participation

The Council will enable group members to take part in meetings or other activities. This might include:

- Access to IT equipment and broadband facilities.
- Guidance on how to use online meeting platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom.
- Providing accessible meeting space.
- Help with travel, parking and childcare costs.

# 5. Working together

## i. Being inclusive and effective as a group

It is important that your group is inclusive, which means that all members must be able to take part fully and have an equal voice in your discussions and decisions.

It is unlikely you will always agree about everything and that is one of the good reasons for having a group – to bring different views to the table. You need to be able to have honest discussions and productive disagreements. By listening to each other and being prepared to change your mind when it makes sense, you can collectively do your best work.



You may find it helpful to address these questions when you first form your RSG:

- How will you make sure that meetings and other communications are equally accessible to all members of your RSG?
- How will you recognise and value the varied knowledge and experience that every member brings to the group?
- How will you support each other and share your own expertise in ways that are understandable and helpful?
- How will you make decisions when it is difficult for the group to reach consensus?
- How will you deal with tensions if they come up from time to time?

The Council will help you explore these questions when you form your RSG and will work with you to resolve any difficulties, so that your RSG is able to achieve its goals.

## ii. Working in the best interests of all residents – what does it mean?

This means that your group should always act on behalf of all the residents that you represent – not, for instance, just the most vocal ones. You (and the Council) will need to help all residents to become fully informed and contribute their views. This is never more important than when you do not agree with people's opinions!

Achieving diverse representation in your group is desirable because it provides opportunities for valuable insights from a variety of perspectives. However, it does not in itself guarantee broad representation, because no single person can be the 'expert' on the varied views of a group to which they belong.

Most importantly, your group needs to understand what the demographics of the area are. Then, whether you are able to mirror that diversity in your group or not, that awareness will play into the way you carry out your role when you consider the best interests of all residents.

Your group (and the officers working with you) may need to 'think out of the box' to be sure to reach everyone within your local community, including those who face inclusion barriers or have an aversion to formal meetings.

**Important Information**

## 6. Recommended reading and additional resources

**Better homes for local people:**
the Mayor's good practice guide to estate regeneration February 2018

- www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/better-homes-for-local-people-the-mayors-good-practice-guide-to-estate-regeneration.pdf

**The Defend Council Homes Policy:**

- www.lbhf.gov.uk/housing/defend-council-homes

▶ **YouTube:**

The videos below were created to inform residents about the DCH Policy during the policy consultation in 2020.

How the DCH Policy came about

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlXN6vm5ng8

An introduction to the DCH Policy

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFd9aGNpU1k&t=5s

When would the DCH policy come into effect and how would it work?

- https://youtu.be/qipCZXNl0EY

Legal Safeguards: the triple lock.

- https://youtu.be/gXtNzf9wXhw

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